

THE HEART—A DEN OF EVIL

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A SERMON
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AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON.

*“For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries,
fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.”
Matthew 15:19.*

WE cannot too often insist upon it that religion is a matter of the heart. It is the besetting sin of man to forget that God is a Spirit, and that worship rendered to God must be of a *spiritual* kind. Idolatry is the full carrying out of this mischievous propensity. Instead of adoring the Great Invisible, and giving Him the love of the heart, man sets up a block of wood or stone, and, burning incense and performing genuflections before it, he cries, “This is my god.” Where this idolatry does not assume the very grossest form it takes another, which is equally as objectionable in the sight of God.

Man pleads that he cannot worship God with his heart unless his memory is assisted by some outward object, and then he smuggles in his idol, and gratifies his depraved nature with will worship and outward formalism. God requires soul worship, and men give Him body worship; He asks for the heart, and they present Him with their lips; He demands their thoughts and their minds, and they give Him banners, and vestments, and candles. Where man is hunted by very shame from outward superstitions, he betakes himself to anything sooner than yield his heart's love to his Maker, submit his intellect to the great Creator's teaching, and render all his faculties to the service of the Most High. No matter how painful may be the mortification, rigid the penance, severe the abstinence, no matter how much may be taken from his purse or the wine vat, or from the store, he will be content to suffer anything sooner than bow before the Most High with a true confession of sin, and trust in the appointed Savior with sincere childlike faith. In this age, as much as in past times, the watchmen of our Israel must insist upon the spirituality of worship, for the old paganism lives among us, altered in form but unchanged in spirit. We spoke of idolatry as being buried at Athens and consigned to its tomb at Rome, but it lives in the Puseyism of the present hour; men are naturally idolaters, and it is nothing but idolatry which nowadays, in the toyshops of the Tractarians is polluting the simplicity of our worship by thrusting their childish symbols and emblems before the sublime truth that God is to be worshipped in spirit, and only to be approached through the atoning sacrifice of His only-begotten Son.

This morning I trust I shall not be guilty of attracting your attention for a single moment to anything that is external, however gaudy or however simple. It is to the human heart that I ask you now to turn your eyes. It is to your own hearts, my hearers, you who are converted and you who are not; it is to a consideration of your own inner natures, that I entreat you now to turn your serious thoughts. My text is a mirror in which every man may see himself; may see, not his face which he can see anywhere, but his heart, his moral nature, his innermost self. Here, sin is man's heart laid bare, turned inside out, anatomized and depicted by one who cannot lie and cannot be deceived.

We shall come to the text at once, and observe, first, *the humiliating doctrine which it teaches*; and then we shall occupy the rest of your time by mentioning *the kindred doctrines of which it reminds us*.

I. FIRST NOTICE THE HUMILIATING TRUTH which the Savior here sets forth. He tells us that out of the heart all sorts of moral evils proceed. He selects not the milder forms of sin but the grosser shades; adulteries, murders, blasphemies, these are words of no common import, and stand for sins of no common dye. The accusation laid against human nature here is one of the most solemn that could possibly be put into words. The Savior has not minced matters in any degree, nor chosen smooth forms of speech, but He has selected the grossest shapes of human sin, and He has said that all these come out of the human heart. There have been men who have asserted that sins are merely accidents of man's position; but the Savior says they come out of his heart. Some have affirmed that they are mistakes of his

judgment that the social system bears so harshly at certain points that men can scarcely do otherwise than offend, for their judgment misleads them; the Savior, however, traces these offenses not to the head and its mistaken judgments, but to the heart and its unholy affections. He plainly tells us that the part of human nature which yields such poisonous fruit is not a bough which may be sawn off, a limb which may be cut away, but the very core and substance of the man—his heart. He, in effect, tells us that lust does not merely come out of the eyes, but from the inmost nature of a depraved being. Murder comes not, in the first place, from the hasty hand, but from a wild ungovernable heart. He declares that theft is not the mere result of a hasty temptation, but is the outflow of a covetous desire which dwells in the being of which disorganized affections are the real source. All the mischiefs mentioned in our text come out of man's essential self—that is what I understand the Savior to mean by the heart. The heart is the true man; it is the very citadel of the City of Mansoul; it is the fountain and reservoir of manhood, and all the rest of man may be compared to the many pipes which run from the fountain through the streets of a city. The Savior puts His finger on the mainspring of the machine of manhood, and cries, "*Here is the evil.*" Like a great physician, He lays His hands upon the very core of human nature and exclaims, "*Here is the disease.*" The leprosy of sin is not as to its primary seat in the head, nor the hand, nor the foot, but in the very heart; the poison is in the center, and consequently all the outlying members share in the poison.

By the heart we usually understand the affections, and doubtless the affections of man are the sources of his crimes. It is because man does not love his Maker with all his heart, and soul, and strength, but loves himself, that he therefore breaks his Maker's laws to please himself. It is because man does not love that which is right, and good, and true, but because he delights in that which is false and evil, that his actions become defiled. It comes to the same thing, you see, whether you interpret the word "*heart*" to mean the central core of the man, or to signify the affections; you come to the same result that it is the man's vital *self* which is wrong, it is manhood's real essence which is evil. Manhood in its most vital essence is corrupt through and through. To use the words of the infinite Jehovah Himself, "Every imagination of the heart of man is evil from his youth." "The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint." "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked."

Observe with humiliation those foul streams which the Savior declares flow from the heart of man. He speaks of *evil thoughts*. Some make little of thoughts of evil, but God does not so judge, for He judges an action not so much by the outward motions of the matter of the body by which the action is performed, as by the inward motion of the inner man by which that motion was instigated and dictated. Evil thoughts have in them the absolute essence of sin quite as surely as evil acts, for when we come to trace an action to its essential evil we have to look to the motive which dictates it, which motive brings us at once into the region of thought. So that evil thoughts, instead of being less evidently sinful than actions, are most clearly the very nest in which the principle and soul of sin is to be found. Men sometimes say, "We shall not be hanged for our thoughts," but it will be well for them to know that unless they repent of them, they certainly will be damned for their thoughts; and even if those thoughts of theirs never shaped themselves into actions, yet their guilt would remain. If the men were shut up in cells, so that they could not commit that which their nature instigated them to do, yet, as before the Lord, seeing they would have been such sinners outwardly if they could have been, their hearts are judged to be no better than the hearts of those who found opportunity to sin and used it. A vicious horse is none the better tempered because the kicking straps prevent his dashing the carriage to atoms; and so a man is really none the better because the restraints of custom and providence may prevent his carrying out that which he would prefer. Poor fallen human nature behind the bars of laws, and in the cage of fear of punishment, is none the less a fearful creature; should its master unlock the door we should soon see what it would be and do.

Evil thoughts flow out of the heart; such as evil thoughts of God, evil thoughts of man; thoughts about evil, doting imaginations, and foul desires, the rolling of evil under the tongue as a sweet morsel, and such like. Many a man who has not committed an outward act of sensual lust has nevertheless thought it over and relished it, and so perpetrated it in his soul. Many a man who had not the courage to be a thief in very deed, has nevertheless been a thief a thousand times over in his heart; and he who dared not blaspheme God with his lips has cursed God in his heart ten thousand times. These evil thoughts are signs of what is in the heart. They would not bubble up within us if they were not first there. They could not come into the mind if they were not essential to the soul.

Our Lord next speaks of *murders*, by which He means, according to John's interpretation of it, every form of unjustifiable anger. Those boiling overs of evil temper, in which we wish people were dead, or otherwise injured, and would gladly punish them if we could, are in the same class as murders. Murders themselves arise from the evil passions of the human heart. If the fire were not there, temptation could not fan it to a flame. Is it not because men love themselves better than their neighbors that they commit murder? It is clear to everyone that it must be so. Therefore it is the failure of the affections to work accurately, which leads men to the commission of this terrible deed. An evil nature sits by the fireside, and murders men in thought, and hurls daggers at them in the house in words, because it is evil, self-loving, and vile.

The inventory next mentions acts of *unchastity*. Men would never fall into evil lusts if it were not that they are dear to their hearts. Because these things are sweet to the heart, therefore men follow them. If the ox drinks water, it is because the ox thirsts; and if man goes after vice, it is because his soul longs after it. Those who never indulged in these actions may yet have meditated upon them, and in such a case the heart has committed uncleanness before God.

So also the injuring of others by *theft* is from the heart. Is it not, again, because we love ourselves better than God, and better than others, that we are tempted to covet and led from covetousness to acts of dishonesty? And when it comes to the bearing of *false witness*, what is this again but an intense lie of one's own proper being, and a lack of love to our neighbors and our God? When the list closes with *blasphemy*, what is this but the heart setting itself up higher than God, and then seeking to tread God beneath its feet by the use of opprobrious and wicked epithets concerning Him? The heart is at the bottom of it all. There would be no murder, no fornication, there could be no blasphemy, if the heart were pure and right; if God were loved first and foremost, these offenses could not occur; but the heart is mischievous, and therefore these things exist.

The Savior does not stop to prove that these things come out of the heart; He asserts it, and asserts it because it is self-evident. When you see a thing coming forth, you are clear it was there first. Last summer I noticed hornets continually flying from a number of decayed logs in my garden; I saw them constantly flying in and out, and I did not think myself at all unreasonable in concluding that there was a hornet's nest there; I suppose that was the inference which everybody would have drawn. If we see the hornets of sin flying out of a man, we suppose at once that there is sin within him. Look at yonder spring; it is bubbling up with cool and fresh water; do you not conclude that somewhere or other there is a reservoir of this water from which it rises? If you did not conclude so, you would be so unreasonable that you might be the common butt of laughter; and when we know that all sorts of evil thoughts and murders, and lustful desires come from men's hearts, it is not at all a difficult conclusion that they must be in men; and inasmuch as all men, more or less, fall into these displays of sin, we conclude that there is in all men a great storehouse of sin, a secret fountain of sin, a mass of inward evil from which outward evil proceeds.

If this needed any sustaining at all I might offer these few observations, namely, *that nobody ever needs any training to commit sin*. Albeit there may be schools of virtue, there is certainly no necessity to open a school for vice. Your child will have evil thoughts without your sending him to a diabolical infant school; lads who have never seen the act of theft, or children who have been brought up in the midst of honesty, will be found guilty of little thefts early enough in life. Lying and false witness, which is one form of lying, is so common that perhaps to find a tongue which never did bear false witness would be to find a tongue that never spoke; is this caused by education or by nature? It is so common a thing that even where the ear has heard nothing but the most rigid truth, children learn to lie and men learn to lie and commonly do lie and love to tell an evil tale against their fellow men whether it is true or not, bearing false witness with an eagerness which is perfectly shocking. Is this a matter of education, or is it a depraved heart? Some men will willfully invent a slanderous lie, knowing that they need not take any special care of their offspring, for they may lay it in the street and the first passerby will take it up and nurse it, and the lie will be carried in triumph round the world; whereas a piece of truth which would have done honor to a good man's character, will be left to be forgotten till God shall remember it at the Day of Judgment. You never need educate any man into sin. As soon as ever the young crocodile has left its shell, it begins to act just like its parent, and bites at the stick which broke the shell. The serpent is scarcely born before it rears itself and begins to hiss. The young tiger may be nurtured in your parlor,

but it will develop before long the same thirst for blood as if it were in the forest. So is it with man; he sins as naturally as the young lion seeks blood, or the young serpent stores up venom. Sin is in his very nature that taints his inmost soul.

What is worse, it is certain that *men sin under all conceivable circumstances*. You have heard much romance about unsophisticated nature: it used to be a theory that the untutored savage saw God in every cloud and heard Him in the wind. But when travelers go to see these model untutored savages, what miserable specimens of humanity they are! The very philosophers who once set them up as being models change their minds, and tell us that they are a connecting link between man and the ape. This is what unsophisticated nature becomes. The ragtags of conventionalism are taken away, the tricks of commerce are removed, and the child of nature is brought up naked, and a very pretty child he is! Let those who admire him live with him, and see if the very brutes do not shame him. The character of the uncivilized man is generally such that it were impossible for us to describe it in your hearing, so degraded and so debased is savage man. Is he not better, however, if he is highly educated? I suppose there was no nation of antiquity more highly educated than the Greeks, and yet if history is credited the private characters of her best philosophers such as Socrates and Solon, were stained with vices revolting to the mind. In modern times there has been ample proof that neither ignorance nor learning is an effectual check to sin. The fool learns sin without his books, and the scholar learns it none the less with all his lore. One of the most educated nations of modern times is India, and what is the moral character of the Hindu? Those who have been among the Hindus never dare to tell all that they have seen, and missionaries inform us in a whisper that what they have seen in the temples where the Hindus meet for worship, and where surely the better parts of their nature ought to be seen in the presence of their gods, is so utterly obscene that it is degrading to the mind to know that such a thing exists.

“Yes,” you say, “some races are vicious both when trained under a certain civilization and when left uncivilized; but how about *Christian* civilization?” Why, the so-called Christians are scarcely any better. A man with religion is not any better than a man without it unless that religion changes his heart and makes a new man of him. The heart under a Christian’s coat is as vile as that under a Bushman’s sheepskin unless divine grace has renewed it. If you take a child and tutor him in all the outward observances of our own holy faith, if you shall see that in everything he is brought up after the straightest sect that your judgment shall select, yet unless the Holy Spirit shall come and give him a new heart and a right spirit his heart will find out ways of showing its sin, put it under what restraint you will. No, it has been notorious that some who were brought up with Puritan rigidity have been the most vicious in later life, and those who have not been so have become what is almost as detestable—hypocritical pretenders to a religion to whose real power they are strangers. “You must be born-again,” is a truth of God which is as true in the Hottentot’s kraal as it is in the midst of this congregation, and as true in the home of piety as it is in the haunt of vice. The old nature everywhere, wash it, and cleanse it, and bind it, and curb it, and bridle it, is still the old fallen nature, and cannot understand spiritual things. You may take the man and treat him as they did the demoniac of old, you may bind him with chains, you may seek to tame him down, but when the old evil spirit comes up again he snaps the bonds of morality and rushes away to one form of sin or another—either to the outward excess of his carnal passions, or else to the equally vicious excess of hypocrisy, formalism and self-conceit.

These things may surely strengthen this truth of God. Man sins in every place, in every shape; and yet more, *he sins after he knows the mischief of sin*. As the moth flies into the candle after singeing its wings, so man will fly into sin after he knows the bitterness of it. If he reforms as to one sin he takes up another, till he does no better for himself than Dr. Watts’s fever patient, of whom he says—

*“It is a poor relief we gain,
To shift the place and keep the pain.”*

They do so; they give up, perhaps, drunkenness. What then? Why then they become self-righteous. If you can drive a man from outward vice, how far have you improved him if he lives in inward sin? You have benefited him as far as the sight of man is concerned, but not before God. There was a man killed on Holborn Hill this week, and I have heard that there was little or no external appearance of injury upon his body. He had been crushed between an omnibus and a cart, and all the wounds were internal, but he died just as surely as if he had been beaten black and blue, or cut in a thousand pieces. So a man may die of internal sin; it does not appear outwardly for certain reasons, but he will die of it just the same if it is

within. Many a man has died from internal bleeding, and yet there has been no wound whatever to be seen by the eyes. You, my dear hearer, may go to hell as well dressed in the garnishing of morality as in the rags of immorality. Unless the very center of your soul and the core of your being are made obedient to the living God He will not accept you, for He looks not only to your outward actions, but to your heart's secret loyalty or treachery towards Himself.

Man sins, moreover—to close this very fearful impeachment against manhood—man sins not as the result of mistaken intellect, but as the result of his heart being vile. When a man sins by mistake, does not know it to be sin, when he sins thinking that he is doing right; as soon as he gets to know his error he forsakes the sin with horror, and flies to God with repentance; but this is never done by men naturally—the natural heart of man, if it finds out sin to be sin, very frequently feels all the more delight in it, just as the apostle Paul says he had not known lust unless the law had said, “You shall not covet.” Our corrupt nature loves forbidden fruit. Some people would not care to work on Sunday unless they had been commanded to rest; many would never care to go to the Crystal Palace on any day in the week, but they crave to go on Sunday simply because it is forbidden. Some fellows are lazy enough on Monday, and make a saint's day of it, and yet Sunday rest they oppose with all their might. It is strange that what God makes common man wants to make special; what God makes special, man wants to make common. As soon as ever a child is told he must not do such a thing, although he had never thought of doing it before, he wants to do it now. That is the nature of us. “When the commandment came,” says the apostle, “sin revived, and I died.” This is not the law's fault, but ours. Cool water thrown upon unslaked lime produces a burning heat; it is not the fault of the water that the heat is produced; the lime alone is to blame. So the very command of God, “You shall not do this,” or “You shall not do that,” leads man into sin, and so it proves the innate and thorough viciousness of the nature of man.

“I do not like it,” says one. “I do not like to hear human nature spoken so evil of.” And do you suppose I like to speak of it in this way? It is no more pleasing to me than to you. “Well, but,” says one, “I believe in the dignity of human nature.” Believe in it, my dear man, and try and prove it if you can! Nobody will be more glad than I shall be to see any true dignity in anybody. But why do we speak like this? Why, because our solemn conviction is that we speak the truth. We thus speak because we believe the word of God teaches it; and, moreover, we know by sorrowful experience that if the charge is not true of others, it is certainly true of us. We have been preserved from known outward sin, but we have to mourn over the terrible evils of our heart; and being willing to endorse the indictment, and personally to plead guilty, we are the more confident in bringing it forward and saying, “This is the case with the whole race of man, without a single exception; they must all stand guilty before God.” Not one heart by nature is right with God; Jew and Gentile are all under sin—“We are all gone out of the way, we are altogether become unprofitable: there is none that does good, no not one.”

II. We shall now turn aside to notice THE TRUTHS WHICH ARE CONNECTED WITH THIS HUMBLING FACT.

First, observe that receiving our Lord's testimony concerning our hearts, that they have become dens of evil, that out of them comes evil thoughts, fornication, theft, and so on, we are driven to believe in *the doctrine of the fall*. If we are in this state, it is inconceivable that God should have made us so. A pure and holy being must have been the creator of pure and holy beings. As Job said, “Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” We may reverse the question and ask, “How could an unclean thing come out of a clean thing?” The Holy God must be the parent of holy children, and when God made manhood He must have made it perfect, otherwise He did not act according to His own nature. It remains a marvelous riddle how man is what he is till you turn to this Book, and when you read the story of the fall the riddle is all solved. Then we see how that first parent of ours, who stood for us as our representative, sinned, and by that sin tainted the whole race, so that we, being born of him, are born in his image and in his likeness, and he being a rebel we are born rebels, he being a traitor we are born traitors, too. “Behold,” says David, “I was shaped in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.” There is the root of the matter. It is not by God's making that we are sinful; it is by Adam's unmaking of us and ruining of us that we come to be what we are, inheritors of original sin and corruption. If it shall be asked, “How is this great mystery still further to be explained, and the justice of it proved?” We answer, that these are things too deep and too high for us, that we think we can see the justice of it, and we have sometimes admired the mercy of it, too; but, nevertheless, we are not accustomed to dispute facts we

cannot understand, but to believe them if God reveals them; and since it is revealed that by one man's transgression many were made sinners, we believe it, and raise no further question. We must leave the fact as a fact, feeling that it is a great deep.

You ask an explanation of this, and refuse to believe till you understand; we are obliged to refer you to all other things in nature which at the bottom must be matters of faith rather than of reason. There are ten thousand mysteries in nature which you know are there, but which you cannot understand. You cannot even tell me what electricity is, or what the attraction of gravitation is. There are these forces, for you see their effects, but how the forces first began you know not; and here is a great force which is in mankind, the force of evil, and you see its effects everywhere, but how it came there you could not have told unless God had said it came there through inheritance from your parents as the result of the fall of Adam, and there you must leave it and bow your heads. Only let this be remembered, if you would prefer every one of you to have stood or fallen for yourselves, it is more than probable you would have fallen, and if you had fallen, you would have fallen forever; for the devils, angels as they once were, stood every one upon his own footing; when, therefore, the angels fell and became devils, they could never be saved—they were left forever to perish; but because we fell in another, and did not fall in the first place in our own persons, it became possible to restore us by the merits of Another, and we have been restored in the person of the Lord Jesus, so that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus is delivered from the fall of Adam, and saved through the merits of the Lord Jesus Christ. The way by which we are ruined was such a way that there was a possibility of our being rescued from it, but had we been ruined by our own actual sin at the commencement, it is probable our ruin would have been like that of those evil spirits for whom are reserved chains of fire and the blackness of darkness forever. This doctrine, then, of the evil character of man necessitates the belief in the fall.

In the next place, this doctrine shows *the need of a new nature*. There is a young man here who says, "I mean to lead a perfectly pure and holy life. I resolve to serve God." Now should we dissuade such a man from the attempt? By no means! It has been sometimes said that we speak against morality. Never, never a word against it; but we have spoken against the attempt being made to produce purity from impurity, and we have said that such a nature as ours needs renewing before it will be holy. If it shall be said that we speak against navigation because we say that leaky vessels are not fit to put to sea, we are content that fools should so judge us; on the contrary, we hold that we are speaking for the true art of navigation when we say to the man with his water-logged vessel, "You must find another ship if you would navigate a boisterous ocean." Young man, you wish to be holy and pure, then remember that if your heart is full of theft, murder, adultery, and so on, it will always be seeking to come forth from you in word and act, and your utmost endeavors will not be able to utterly restrain the outcoming of that which is there, according to Christ's word. You had better, then, instead of beginning in your *own* strength, stop awhile and count the cost. What if you could get a new heart and a right spirit? What if that nature of yours could be changed? What if the Divine One who made Adam perfect should make you anew? What if He should drop into you a new spark of life of a higher order than that which now possesses you? Then you would have a nature as inclined to holiness as your present nature tends to sin. Then you would, by force of a new nature, follow after that which is right, as you now naturally follow after that which is evil. "Oh," you say, "is this possible?" Possible? It is the gospel of our salvation! We tell you that whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ shall be saved; and the process of salvation consists in part of the implantation of a new nature. By trusting in Jesus you come to love Him, and the love of Him, by the power of the Divine Spirit, becomes a master passion, a new heart, by which you war with your old passions, trample them under foot, and subdue them. As soon as you clearly see in your soul, by the Holy Spirit, that Jesus loved you, and gave Himself for you, your heart sings—

*"Now for the love I bear His name,
What was my gain I count my loss;
My former pride I call my shame,
And nail my glory to His cross."*

Then you have a new object for your love; instead of loving self, you love God in the person of His Son, Jesus Christ, and that new love becomes to you the heart which overcomes the old corruption, and prompts you to walk in holiness and in the fear of God all your days. Oh, young man, go not forth to this warfare till you have considered the charges. As good men as you have sought to fight with sin, and

have found its arm too strong for them. Come to the cross and ask the Savior who fought Himself with temptation and overcame it, ask Him to cleanse you from your past sins in His precious blood; ask Him to let His Divine Spirit, who is the great Regenerator, enter into you, and make you a new creature; and when you are a new creature then there shall be the new longings, the new hopes, the new fears, which shall enable you to follow a new course to the glory of God. If your heart is evil, you must get a new heart or you cannot be holy.

Do you not see how necessary it is that we should be regenerate or made new creatures, because such a heart as ours cannot possibly enter into heaven? If the natural heart is a great barracks of evil, a sort of city with a hundred gates from which black warriors of sin are continually streaming, how can such an abomination as that ever pass through the pearly gates and be where God is, before the eternal throne? O sirs, these hearts of ours, these depraved affections must be slain; they must be crucified with Christ, they must be conquered, put down, stamped out, or how can we be where Jesus is? Who can do this but the Holy Spirit? He can do it, He can do it now, He can put into you a new heart which will begin fighting with this old heart at once, which will go on fighting with it as long as you live—contending, struggling, wrestling, till at last it will drive the old loves out; your affections will no more be set on self and on evil things, but you will become as pure as God is pure, because God Himself has renewed you in the spirit of your mind. Then you shall enter heaven, then you shall dwell with angels, then you shall see God because you have been made perfectly like God by the work of the Holy Spirit. Reverence and esteem dear hearers that blessed Spirit who can make new creatures of us. Pray to Him that the old man may die in us, that it may be crucified daily; that the old nature may be buried in the tomb of the Savior, and that a new heart and right spirit in us may continually gather strength and force till they shall come to their ultimate perfection, and we shall enter into our rest.

There is another doctrine which receives also very great strength from this truth of God. If man's heart is nothing but a source of blackness and sin, *admire the divine grace of God*. What could have led the Lord to save such creatures as we have described if they are indeed such creatures? What but sovereign grace could look on such wretches? Those who give glory to human merit always try to puff up human nature by speaking in its praise, but we who believe human nature to be utterly fallen and debased. We admire the wonderful kindness and matchless goodness of God, that He should ever have set His love upon such unworthy creatures. Paul is in admiration of it when he says, "His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins." A heart full of evil thoughts, and yet He loved me! A heart full of fornication and adultery, and yet He loved me! A heart full of murder, and yet He loved me! A heart that could bear false witness, a heart that could blaspheme, and yet He loved us! O brothers and sisters, if we could see ourselves as God saw us in the fall, we should wonder how the eyes of infinite purity could have borne with us, how the heart of infinite love could have set itself upon us. You were not loved because of your goodness, you were not chosen because of anything in you that was lovely and amiable, you were loved because He would love you; you were chosen because He would do it for His name's sake—

*"He saw you ruined in the fall,
Yet loved you notwithstanding all;
He saved you from your lost estate,
His loving-kindness, oh how great!"*

Why, beloved, it must be sovereign grace from top to bottom. Grace must be the Alpha, grace must be the Omega. If this is the true state of the case I do not wonder that so many kick against the doctrine of election and the kindred doctrines of grace when they have such a high opinion of themselves; but if God would make them see their own hearts then they would cry out, "God be merciful to me a sinner!" And then they would understand that if ever a man is saved, it is not by his own doing or his own willing, but by divine grace alone. It is not of him who wills nor of him who runs, but of God who shows mercy, for He will have compassion on whom He will have compassion. The sovereignty of God would become an easy doctrine to believe if we felt the depravity of our own hearts; if we saw ourselves as in the glass of Scripture, and abhorred ourselves in dust and ashes, then instead of having any claims upon God we would say, "Let Him do as seems good to Him," and make our appeal not to His justice but to His unfathomable mercy, crying, "According to the multitude of Your loving-kindnesses and Your tender mercies blot out my iniquities."

Yet once again; how this doctrine illustrates *the doctrine of the atonement*. Brothers and sisters, sin defiles us most horribly; its act defiles our character, but its essence has ruined our nature. It appears from Christ's statement that we are defiled internally as well as outwardly, that sin is not only an eruption as it were upon the skin, but it is in the center of our nature. Behold, then, the need of the precious blood and admire its wonderful potency! The blood of God's own dear Son which streamed on Calvary's accursed tree cleanses us in our inner man. O matchless blood! O marvelous purification! Come here, sinner; though your sins are as scarlet they shall be as wool, and though your heart itself is even more scarlet than your actions, He can cleanse your heart as well as your life. Christ can cleanse the fountain and the stream, too; He can remove the external leprosy, and heal the internal leprosy, also; both root and branch He bears away. O souls, admire and wonder; bow down with tears streaming from your eyes, and then look up with gladness to the Son of God made flesh, crucified for sinners, for whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life. Come, you black-hearted! Come, you defiled and ruined sons of Adam! Come, you who are perishing at the gates of hell shut out from hope! Come, you who like the men of Zebulun and Naphtali sit in darkness and in the valley of the shadow of death. Come and trust Christ, and He will send His Spirit upon you, and give you new hearts and right spirits; from all your iniquities will He cleanse you, He will be the new Creator, for He sits on the throne this day, and He says, "Behold, I make all things new."

Oh that Jesus may make some new who are here this morning! I have laid the axe at the root of the tree; and every tree that is here must be cut down and cast into the fire, unless Christ changes the nature of that tree, and makes it bring forth fruit unto righteousness. I have tried to show that man is utterly ruined in himself; that he has become like the ruins of Babylon where hideous dragons and all manner of loathsome creatures dwell. I will even liken him to the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt, where Satan dwells as a leviathan and with him innumerable creeping things, things obscene and horrible. I have tried, as far as I could, to preach the old unfashionable truth of God, and I expect to be hated for so doing; but now over all there comes the proclamation of mercy—that God is in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their iniquities; and whoever believes in Him shall be delivered from the mischief of the fall, and lifted to dwell where God is, in perfect purity and happiness. What a wonder is this choice mercy that a den of dragons should become a temple of the Holy Spirit! What a wonder that the heart, through which blasphemy raged, should become a soul in which divine grace reigns! That the profane mouth should become the organ of holy song! Oh what a thousand wonders, that that black heap of human nature, that dunghill of the heart, should yet be made pure as alabaster, glittering in holy light, and bright with heaven, shining like pure gold, like transparent glass; and that the Holy Spirit Himself should agree to dwell where the devil dwelt! "Know you not that your bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit?" What wonder! Once they were the temples of lust, of anger, of evil speaking, of blasphemy; and yet they can be, and I trust now are, the temples of the Holy Spirit. Oh marvelous! Marvelous! Let us bless God, and ask that we may realize in ourselves this wondrous miracle to the praise and glory of His grace, where He has made us accepted in the Beloved.

PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—MATTHEW 15:1-20.

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